

An Environmental Milestone
By Council President Scott Peters, First District
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The City of San Diego recently celebrated a major environmental accomplishment; the City has surpassed the 50% waste recycling goal set by the state. In fact, the City now recycles 52% of its waste, preserving open space, helping the planet and extending the life of the Miramar landfill.

How did we reach this milestone? Well, a lot of it is thanks to you, the residents of Peñasquitos, Carmel Mountain, RB and other communities who put their newspapers, glass bottles, soda cans and recyclable plastics into the city-provided blue bins. Every water bottle and soda can we recycle is one more item not taking up space in the landfill.

Another way we surpassed our goal is by diverting biosolids to the City's Metro Biosolids Center located adjacent to the Miramar landfill. Before the biosolids center opened in 1998, solid waste from the wastewater system was sent to Fiesta Island to dry out, then trucked to the landfill. Today, that nutrient-rich organic matter is pumped from the Point Loma sewage treatment plant, processed and used to enrich soil and cover the landfill. We also use the nutrient-rich organic matter for electric power "cogeneration," providing the power for both the Metro Biosolids Center and the North City Water Reclamation Plant. The City has received a number of design and environmental awards for the biosolids program.

This is one of many ways the City has pursued energy independence and improved our local environment. The City's energy conservation program was recognized last year with a "Flex Your Power" award from the State of California. The U.S. Department of Environmental Protection also named San Diego the number one city for producing and using environmentally friendly "green power" from renewable sources. In the last few years, the Police Department headquarters, City Hall and other city buildings have been overhauled to be more energy independent by using multi-speed fans, photovoltaics and other energy-management techniques.

Another environmental accomplishment we can all be particularly proud of is the dramatic reduction in the number of sewage spills. There were 365 sewage spills in 2000, the year I took office, averaging one per day. Thanks to a comprehensive pipeline cleaning, replacement and monitoring program, as well as the establishment of a canyon watchdog program, the City reduced the number of sewage spills 84% in the past five years.

None of this would be possible without the help and support of environmentally-conscious citizens who attend public forums, volunteer for canyon monitoring and other programs, and make recycling a priority for their families. My thanks to all of you for helping San Diego reach another environmental milestone.